

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12 TRSE-00
OMB-01 MCT-01 /087 W
-----129679 171330Z /45

O 171226Z MAY 78 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7295
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 988

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, SF, WA
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: SAG PROPOSES TO COMMENCE REGISTRATION OF
NAMIBIAN VOTERS

FOLLOWING IS THE AGREED REPORT OF THE CAPE TOWN FIVE AFTER
THEIR MEETING WITH BOTHA TODAY, MAY 17:

1. THE CAPE TOWN FIVE MET MINISTER BOTHA AT 0930 HOURS THIS
MORNING FOR ONE AND A-HALF HOURS.

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2. BOTHA SAID HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY HIS GOVERNMENT TO
INFORM US THE DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN THAT REGISTRATION
OF VOTERS MUST NOW BEGIN IMMEDIATELY IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA
FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS (IN BOTHA'S WORDS VIRTUALLY VERBATIM):

A. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAD ACCEPTED OUR PROPOSAL
THREE WEEKS AGO. THEY FELT THAT THIS WAS A REASONABLY

LONG ENOUGH PERIOD FOR THE OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES TO HAVE MADE UP THEIR MINDS ON THE PROPOSAL. THE FIVE HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR-LONG DISCUSSIONS THEY HAD BEEN CONSULTING SWAPO AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES AS THEY WENT ALONG. THE END RESULT COULD NOT THEREFORE HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY UNEXPECTED BY ANYONE INVOLVED AND NO ONE COULD CLAIM THAT IT REQUIRED A LONG PERIOD TO COME TO A DECISION AFTER THE PROPOSALS HAD BEEN PRESENTED IN FINAL AND DEFINITIVE FORM.

B. THE TARGET DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE WAS 31 DECEMBER 1978. ON PRESENT ESTIMATES, IT WOULD TAKE AT LEAST THREE MONTHS TO COMPLETE THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS EVEN IF THIS BEGAN IMMEDIATELY; THERE WAS THUS ALREADY ALMOST NO POSSIBILITY OF MEETING THE TARGET DATE. IN ORDER TO STAY AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO THIS DATE, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT REGISTRATION COMMENCE IMMEDIATELY.

C. HE BELIEVED THAT WE WOULD AGREE ON THE OBVIOUS NECESSITY FOR MAINTAINING CREDIBILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA'S COMMITMENT, AS WELL AS THE COMMITMENT OF THE FIVE WESTERN POWERS, TO ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL SOLUTION FOR THE TERRITORY AND TO ACT IN GOOD FAITH IN THIS REGARD. HE BELIEVED WE WOULD ALSO AGREE THE CURRENT PERIOD OF INACTION CREATED FAVORABLE GROUND FOR THOSE WHO WISHED TO WRECK THE ELECTION. REGISTRATION OUGHT TO ASSIST IN NEUTRALIZING HOSTILE EFFORTS IN THIS DIRECTION. (HE VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WAS NOT IDENTIFYING THE FORCES HE WAS REFERRING TO.)

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D. THE GENERAL DOMESTIC SITUATION IN SWA DEMANDED THE REMOVAL OF UNCERTAINTY, WHICH LED TO DESPONDANCY AND THUS TO FRUSTRATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS. REGISTRATION OF VOTERS WOULD INDICATE THAT THE END OF THE ROAD WAS INDEPENDENCE AND THAT THE SAG WAS SERIOUS IN WISHING TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

3. WHEN HE FINISHED READING FROM HIS PREPARED NOTES, BOTHA COMMENTED THAT THE SAG REGARDED THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS AS A NEUTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE STEP WHICH WAS A PREREQUISITE FOR FUTURE POLITICAL DETERMINATION BASED ON THE PROPOSALS OF THE FIVE. THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS WOULD NOT FAVOR ANY POLITICAL PARTY OR VIEW. IT WAS A PRELIMINARY STEP WHICH WOULD FACILITATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS. IT WAS A CLEAR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED ITSELF BOUND TO ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THOSE PROPOSALS. (EMBASSY COMMENT: BOTHA ALSO SAID HE HAD MADE A CAREFUL CHECK TO ASSURE THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS WAS NOT CONTRARY TO THE WESTERN PROPOSAL.)

4. BOTHA THEN SAID THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT NOW INVITED THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO PROCEED TO SOUTH WEST AFRICA TO SATISFY HIMSELF AS REGARDS

THE REQUIREMENTS AND MACHINERY FOR REGISTRATION. IF HE
COULD NOT DO SO NOW, HE COULD DO SO AT A LATER STAGE
AFTER ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL;
SHOULD HE AT THAT STAGE WISH TO HAVE ANY ALTERATIONS MADE,
HIS VIEWS WOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. THE SAG WISHED TO
EMPHASIZE THAT THE REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS AND MACHINERY
WOULD BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH CLEARLY ESTABLISHED UN PRACTICE
IN PAST PLEBISCITES. IT WAS NOT THEREFORE ENVISAGED THAT THE
SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE WOULD HAVE ANY OBJECTIONS, BUT, SHOULD
HE RAISE OBJECTIONS, HIS VIEWS WOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 988

5. BOTHA WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WAS INSTRUCTED TO POINT
OUT THAT THE INVASION OF THE SHABA PROVINCE ADDED A FURTHER
DANGEROUS DIMENSION TO THE LARGER ISSUE OF ACHIEVING PEACE
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND UNDERLINED THE NECESSITY FOR MOVING
SPEEDILY AHEAD WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIVE'S
PROPOSAL. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVT WAS, MOREOVER,
DISAPPOINTED AND DISMAYED AT THE FACT THAT THE FIVE DID

NOT VOTE AGAINST THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION, WHICH HAD BEEN PASSED AFTER THE SAG HAD ACCEPTED THE FIVE'S PROPOSALS. THE FIVE'S INABILITY TO DO SO WAS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHO WERE NOT INTERESTED IN A PEACEFUL SOLUTION
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TO THE PROBLEM OF SOUTH WEST AFRICA.

6. FINALLY, HE REGISTERED HIS GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTION TO THE NEGATIVE REACTION OF THE FIVE TO THE STEPS TAKEN TO SAFEGUARD THE SECURITY OF THE TERRITORY AND ITS PEOPLE, AND URGED THE FIVE TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO PERSUADE SWAPO TO CEASE ITS ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM AGAINST CIVILIANS IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA.

7. HAVING GIVEN US THE OFFICIAL MESSAGE BOTHA WENT ON TO GIVE US HIS PERSONAL VIEWS "AS MAN TO MAN". INITIALLY, HE HAD NEVER BELIEVED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THE RESULT WHICH HAD BEEN REACHED ON 25 APRIL (SAG ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL). THE FIVE AMBS WERE NOT UNAWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES HE HAD FACED IN THIS RESPECT. IN SEEKING THE CABINET'S APPROVAL OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL, HE HAD ASSUMED THAT ACTS OF TERRORISM WOULD HAVE DIMINISHED AFTER SOUTH AFRICA'S ACCEPTANCE. "BUT I WAS WRONG". INSTEAD, SWAPO HAD DOUBLED THEIR TERRORIST ACTIVITY. THE DECISION TO ACT AGAINST THE TERRORISTS HAD NOT BEEN TAKEN UNTIL A WEEK AFTER THE DECISION TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL.

8. AS SOON AS WE HAD A CHANCE TO INTERVENE, WE TOLD BOTHA WE WOULD REPORT WHAT HE HAD SAID TO OUR GOVTS AND TO THE CONTACT GROUP IN NEW YORK. ALTHOUGH WE WERE NOT IN A POSITION TO MAKE ANY SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT AT THIS STAGE, WE URGENTLY REQUESTED HIM NOT TO PUBLISH THE SAG'S DECISION UNTIL THE FIVE HAD A CHANCE TO CONSIDER IT. WE REMINED HIM THE DELAY WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE SINCE SOUTH AFRICA'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL WAS NOT OF OUR MAKING: AS HE KNEW, WE ALREADY HAD A MEETING WITH SWAPO LINED UP WHICH WAS CALLED OFF AS A RESULT OF THE CASSINGA RAID. WE WERE NOW URGENTLY CONSIDERING HOW
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WE COULD TAKE MATTERS FORWARD, BUT INEVITABLY THERE WOULD BE SOME FURTHER DELAY.

9. WE POINTED OUT THAT THE DECISION WOULD BE WIDELY REGARDED AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS AN INTERNAL SOLUTION

AND WOULD THEREFORE CREATE NEW DIFFICULTIES FOR US IN OUR DEALINGS WITH THE OTHER PARTIES. MOREOVER, A REFUSAL BY SWAPO SUPPORTERS TO REGISTER WOULD DISCREDIT THE WHOLE REGISTRATION EXERCISE. BOTHA APPEARED TO ACCEPT THESE ARGUMENTS.

10. BOTHA SAID THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ABOUT TO INFORM THE PARTY CAUCUS OF THE DECISION AND IT WAS INTENDED TO ISSUE A PRESS RELEASE THEREAFTER. WE ASKED HIM MOST URGENTLY THAT THIS ANNOUNCEMENT SHOULD BE RECONSIDERED. BOTHA AGREED TO CONSULT THE PRIME MINISTER IMMEDIATELY WITH A VIEW TO HOLDING UP THE ANNOUNCEMENT.

11. DURING THE MINISTER'S ABSENCE, FOURIE OBSERVED THAT ONE ADVANTAGE OF PROCEEDING QUICKLY WITH A NON-ETHNIC REGISTRATION OF VOTERS WAS THAT THE EXISTING WHITE VOTERS ROLE WOULD IMMEDIATELY DISAPPEAR. (THIS WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR AKTUR TO CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR A WHITE ELECTION ON THE EXISTING VOTERS ROLE.)

12. WHEN BOTHA RETURNED AFTER A FEW MINUTES, HE SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD AGREED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO DELAY ANNOUNCING THE GOVT'S DECISION FOR A SHORT TIME, THOUGH NOT LONGER THAN ABOUT TWO WEEKS. IT WOULD IN ANY CASE TAKE SOME TIME TO PUT THE REGISTRATION MACHINERY TOGETHER. IN REPLY TO OUR QUESTION HE SAID THAT THE DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH THE REGISTRATION COULD BE ANNOUNCED BY THE ADMINISTRATOR-GENERAL RATHER THAN BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVT.

13. IT WAS AGREED THAT WE SHOULD TELL THE PRESS THAT OUR
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MEETING HAD TAKEN STOCK OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AS REGARDS SOUTH WEST AFRICA. IF ASKED, WE COULD SAY THAT FURTHER MEETINGS WOULD TAKE PLACE IN DUE COURSE.
NELSON

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TAGS: PORG, PINT, PDEV, SF, WA, (BOTH, PIK)
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